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**CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF
TEXAS**

FLOOR STATEMENT

ON H.RES. 861

**“Declaring That the United States Will Prevail in the Global
War on Terrorism”**

JUNE 15, 2006

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I rise to speak on H.R. 861, a resolution which declares that the “United States will prevail in the Global War on Terrorism.” I believe that is the resolve of all Members of this House and of all Americans. But to prevail in the global war on terrorism, we must remain focused on the Global War on Terrorism, and not allow ourselves to be diverted or distracted.

Unfortunately, we have been have been distracted from waging a full-scale, all-out global war on terrorism by the President's fateful decision to go to war in Iraq. Before and after 9/11, Iraq was not a part of the global war on terror, much less the central front. It only became so when the President launched his ill-advised preemptive attack.

I am proud to be among the majority of House Democrats who voted against the Resolution Authorizing the Use of Military Force (AUMF) in 2002, which authorized the President to use military force to disarm Iraq of its alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD). I voted against going to war in Iraq because I thought it a diversion from the important task facing the nation and that was winning the Global War on Terror. History has shown that we were right. The ill-advised rush to War in Iraq has not only been a diversion from the War on Terror but a strategic disaster of epic proportions. As Thomas Jefferson would say, to prove this let facts be submitted to a candid world.

I. The Bush Iraq Policy Has Harmed The U.S. Military

We just learned today the sad news that the 2,500th soldier has been killed in Iraq. More than 19,000 others have been wounded. The Bush administration's open-ended commitment of U.S. troops to Iraq has weakened the U.S. Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army

Reserves. The extended deployments in Iraq have eroded U.S. ground forces and overall military strength. A Pentagon-commissioned study concluded that *the Army cannot maintain its current pace of operations in Iraq without doing permanent damage to the quality of the force*. So more than three years of a continuous deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq has:

- Contributed to serious problems with recruitment, with the U.S. Army missing its recruitment targets last year;
- Forced the Army to lower its standards for military recruits; and
- Led to military equipment shortages that hamper the ability of U.S. ground forces to do their job in Iraq and around the world.

The large and extended deployment of National Guard units overseas has undermined the ability of the United States to deal with terrorist attacks or natural disasters. *For example, state officials in Louisiana and Mississippi struggled to overcome the absence of National Guard members from their states in the wake of Hurricane Katrina*. In Louisiana, about 100 of the National Guard's high-water vehicles remain abroad — even as the state continues to rebuild from Hurricane Katrina. Coastal North Carolina is missing nearly half its Humvee fleet, and Guard officials there say shortages have forced the state to pool equipment from different units into one pot of hurricane supplies.

In addition, the equipment the Guard needs to help in the aftermath of natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina is in shorter supply because the gear

is in use in combat zones, is battle-damaged, or has been loaned to cover gaps in other units.

1. War in Iraq has diverted resources and attention from other fronts in the fight against global terrorist networks.

The killing of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi last week was a major success for U.S. troops, but it is not likely to diminish Iraq's insurgency. Iraqis make up 90 percent of Iraq's insurgency, unlike foreign fighters like Zarqawi, and a primary motivation for Iraq's insurgency is the U.S. troop presence. Even after the Samarra shrine attack in February threatened to push Iraq into all-out sectarian civil war, the vast majority of attacks still target U.S. forces.

Outside of Iraq, the Bush administration has failed to present a realistic strategy for countering the threat posed by the global terror networks. In a recent survey of more than 100 of America's leading foreign policy experts conducted by *Foreign Policy* magazine and the Center for American Progress, eight in 10 (84 percent) do not think that the United States is winning the war on terror. The War in Iraq has not helped America win the broader fight against global terrorists. Instead:

- ? By invading Iraq without a realistic plan to stabilize the country, the Bush administration created a new terrorist haven where none had previously existed.
- ? By maintaining an open-ended military presence in Iraq, the Bush administration is presenting U.S. terrorist enemies with a recruitment

tool and rallying cry for organizing attacks against the U.S. and its allies.

- ? According to the National Counter-Terrorism Center, the number of large-scale terrorist attacks in Iraq increased by over 100 between 2004 and 2005, with a total 8,299 civilians killed in 2005.
- ? Osama bin Laden remains at large and Al Qaeda offshoots proliferate.
- ? By diverting resources and attention from Afghanistan to an unnecessary war of choice in Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration has left Afghanistan exposed to a resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The United States needs to complete the mission in Afghanistan and cannot do it with so many troops bogged down in Iraq.
- ? By focusing so many U.S. resources on Iraq, the Bush administration has taken its eye off the ball in places like Somalia, which was overrun by Islamist militias tied to Al Qaeda last week.

2. The War in Iraq has increased the burden on U.S. taxpayers without stabilizing Iraq or making Americans safer.

Over the last three years, the United States has spent more than \$300 billion in Iraq, yet the investment has failed to stabilize Iraq or improve the overall quality of life for most Iraqis. According to the Congressional Research Service, total assistance to Iraq thus far is roughly equivalent to total assistance, adjusted for inflation, provided to Germany — and almost double that provided to Japan from 1946 to 1952. Yet on key metrics like oil production, Iraq has failed to advance beyond pre-war levels, and quality of life indicators remain dismal:

- Oil production is below pre-war levels (2.6 million barrels per day in 2003 vs. 2.1 million barrels per day in May 2006);

- The majority of water sector projects and health care clinics planned in 2003 remain not completed, despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars;
- One in three Iraqi children is malnourished and underweight, according to the United Nations Children's Fund.

Rather than a record of progress and achievement, the Bush administration's record is one of corruption and waste:

- \$8.8 billion given to Iraqi ministries by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) remains unaccounted for, according to the Congressional Research Service;
- Iraqi Defense Ministry officials spent \$1 billion on questionable arms purchases;
- The Interior Ministry has at least 1,100 ghost employees, costing \$1.3 million a month.

In short, we have no strategy, no support from allies or friends in the region, a nascent civil war in the country we are supposed to be helping, an overstretched military, a misdirected counterterrorism effort, and a massive diversion of funds in support of a failed effort.

II. Responding to Administration Myths and Fantasies

The Bush administration and its Rubber-stamp Republican allies in the House have politicized national security in the past. They have used national security as a wedge issue to divide the country and push for policies that have not made Americans safer. But today a majority of Americans are now skeptical about the Bush administration's Iraq policy.

Myth 1: Democrats want to quit while we are ahead and the Iraqis are just getting started.

Conservatives argue that Democrats who criticize and offer alternatives are snatching defeat from the jaws of victory, retreating just as the Iraqi government needs the most help.

Fact:

The time has come for the United States to give Iraqis the incentive to stand on their own two feet and take control of their own affairs. In a few short months, the U.S. military involvement in Iraq will be longer than it took the United States to win World War II. The open-ended commitment of U.S. troops fuels as much as it retards the insurgency and civil conflict in Iraq. Nearly nine in 10 Iraqis approve a timeline for U.S. withdrawal, and 70 percent of the Iraqi public supports the withdrawal of U.S.-led forces by the end of 2007. A growing number of Iraqis, including the new prime minister, are saying that Americans must begin to leave.

U.S. troops have done their share. By getting rid of Saddam Hussein, they have given Iraqis an historic opportunity to take charge of their destiny. By fostering the birth of the constitution and the holding of elections, they have assisted in the building of a new democracy. They have trained more

than a quarter of a million Iraqi security forces. It would be self-defeating for the United States to want Iraq to succeed more than Iraqis do.

Myth 2: Democrats offer only “cut and run” and “retreat and defeat.”

Facts:

Belittling opponents will not divert attention from a failed policy. Staying the course and offering a vague and open-ended commitment of U.S. troops gives Iraqis a blank check and a veto of America’s national security.

The future of Iraq cannot be more sacred to Americans than to Iraqis. Responsible redeployment offers Iraqis a chance to take responsibility for their political and security future after we have already aided in the creation of a new constitution, the staging of two elections, and the training of a quarter of a million security forces.

Myth 3: Democrats who raise questions and oppose the Bush Iraq policy are unpatriotic.

Over the past three years, the Bush administration has questioned the patriotism of its critics.

Facts:

Our country’s democratic system requires the active involvement of Congress on key policy questions — particularly at a time of war. The

United States has a strong tradition of its Congress asking tough questions during a time of war, including the hearings organized by Democratic Senators like Senator Harry Truman during World War II and Senator William Fulbright during Vietnam, even though the White House was controlled by Democrats.

It is the patriotic duty of members of Congress to hold the executive branch accountable, especially during a time of war. Two prominent Vietnam War veterans, Republican Chuck Hagel and Democrat John Murtha, have recently argued that it is unpatriotic NOT to raise questions in a time of war. America suffers when Congress and the public are silent.

Myth 4: Democrats reject the Bush administration's efforts to advance freedom.

Facts:

The Bush plan for Iraq is solidly grounded in a flawed view of combating terrorism, arguing that promoting a narrow vision of democracy will crowd out and defeat terrorists.

The United States must and should support real democratic transitions around the world. But the Bush administration's naïve approach to democracy promotion — narrowly focused on elections — has failed by giving terrorist organizations an opening to seize the reins of power, as seen

by the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections earlier this year. Terrorists have been exploiting the Bush administration's flawed and narrow strategy focused on the most ostensible images of democracy, like purple fingers in elections.

Despite impressive gains in Iraq's political transition, the country remains in the very early and fragile stages of a long-term process of building a real democracy. Contrary to the rhetoric put forth by the Bush administration, Iraqis do not live in freedom, according to Freedom House, which measures trends in political rights and civil liberties over the past three decades. The rights of women and minorities are not protected; the rule of law is honored more in the breach than the observance; and political violence remains rampant. Despite much work left undone, the Bush administration has cut funding for programs to support freedom and democracy in Iraq this year.

Myth 5: Democrats who criticize the Bush policy hurt the morale of the troops.

The Bush administration and its conservative allies have said that offering criticisms and concrete policy alternatives on Iraq hurts the morale of U.S. troops.

Facts:

There is no evidence that debate at home has any effect at all on the morale of troops. **But other factors directly impact the lives of U.S. troops and morale — including going to war without the right equipment and armor, not having a realistic strategy for Iraq, and not taking care of the troops after they come home.**

- **Not equipping the troops.** When asked by a soldier in the field why U.S. troops did not have the right armor for their vehicles, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said, “As you know, you have to go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you want.” Iraq was a war of choice, and the Bush administration had time to get ready.
- **Not taking care of the troops when they come home.** The Bush administration has not developed policies to take care of the troops when they return from battle. Health care has proven inadequate, and wounded veterans have been hounded by debt collectors because of inefficiencies in the Pentagon’s administrative systems.

Myth 6: Democrats who oppose the Bush Iraq policy are ignoring and not listening to the generals.

Facts:

It is the Bush administration that has failed to listen to top U.S. generals before and during the invasion by not sending enough troops to stabilize the country. It is Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld who has constrained free expression in the military by firing or forcing out those who disagree.

Nonetheless, even the current commanding officers argue that the United States needs to take realistic steps to reduce its military presence to remove the fuel that fires the insurgency. For example, in October 2005, General John Abizaid, the commander of Central Command Forces, argued that the United States must reduce its “military footprint” in Iraq and the region as a means to create more stability, but President Bush has continued to stick with a “stay the course” message.

Myth 7: Democrats who criticize the Bush Iraq policy are helping the terrorists and giving them what they want.

The Bush administration has argued that questioning its plan emboldens America’s terrorist enemies, an unconstitutional argument aimed solely at shutting off real debate at home. Harkening back to 2002, when Bush officials warned that people should “watch what they say,” President Bush and top officials in his administration have warned against “irresponsible” debate to limit and control democratic political debate at home, even while the Bush administration purports to advance democracy abroad.

Facts:

Bush policies at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib do more to undermine our place in the world than any words spoken by administration critics. The

Bush administration policies that coerce rather than create cooperation through dialogue and common purpose undermine how others view us. A new poll by the Pew Research Center finds that America's image has slipped further, and global support has declined for the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

Myth 8: Democrats prefer a world with Saddam Hussein still in charge of Iraq.

Facts:

Saddam Hussein was an evil dictator, and it is a good thing that he is no longer in power. But that is not the key question today. The key question is: Where is Iraq now, and where does it go from here? And the many mistakes made by the Bush administration — including sending in too few troops to secure the country and invading without a clear and realistic plan for Iraq's reconstruction — have made the situation in Iraq much worse off than it should have been.

Iraq has become a failing state and is suffering from several major internal conflicts — in large part the consequence of the Bush administration's failure to plan for the post-war situation. And moving forward requires Iraqis, not Americans, to be in charge of the future.

Myth 9: Democrats just want to criticize and politicize Iraq and do not have plans about what to do.

Facts:

This is simply not true. A growing number of leading Democrats and other progressive leaders have offered sensible alternative visions about what the United States should do next to set the right course in Iraq. Nearly all progressive plans recognize that the United States must intensify its political and diplomatic efforts in Iraq and that the commitment of U.S. troops to Iraq should not be permanent or open-ended.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, I close by quoting from the Declaration of Independence and the motto of the U.S. Army, which marks its 231st anniversary today. It may seem odd to quote the two together. But I do so because real patriots have courage – courage to face the truth and the courage to speak truth even when it is unpopular. The Declaration of Independence, with its affirmation of the inalienable human rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness gave patriots the courage to fight for a cause that was just but at the time thought by most to be unattainable. A motto of the U.S. Army is “We will not falter, we will not fail.”

The War in Iraq does not help us in the Global War on Terror. There are only two directions to take in Iraq: President Bush’s plan of staying the course and letting a future President clean up the mess, or the Murtha plan to change the direction of that course. I stand with Rep. Murtha in calling for

the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq to make our country safer, our military stronger, and the region more stable. I support the Murtha Plan. It is the only plan for success in Iraq that is worthy of the sacrifices made by our troops.

Our troops in Iraq have never faltered and they have never failed. They were never defeated in battle. They won the war they were sent to fight. They completed their mission. They performed magnificently. Well done. Well done. Well done.

Our troops have earned the right to return home and be reunited with their families and loved ones. Now is not the time for us in Congress to falter or fail. Now is the time to embrace a plan for our troops in Iraq that offers a chance of success. We need a plan that will work. There is only one such plan. It is the Murtha Plan I support. I yield back.